

DOCUMENTING AND PRESERVING *TEKNA*: THE KAYANS ORAL TRADITION OF BARAM

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Like many other indigenous peoples of Sarawak, the Kayans are well-known for their traditional cultural expressions. *Tekna*’ is one of them. *Tekna*’ is loosely defined as a form of oral tradition that is learned through memorizing its storyline and only by experience, one can be extremely good at it; and generally it refers to a type of song that contains various types of folktales which usually depicted and adored the supernatural power possessed by the people from ‘another world’. Due to its intricate form and singing style, *tekna*’ is an unpopular form of storytelling among the younger Kayans generations. There are not many *tukang tekna*’ left to ensure the survival of this oral tradition amidst today’s modern and global entertainment. Thus this paper offers an overview on *tekna*’ and a reflection of our experience with the *tukang tekna*’ as we embarked on a journey to document *tekna*’ both in visual and audio forms. During the course of our field research, we have had privilege to conduct an in depth interview with a few left renown *tukang tekna*’ in the Baram District. Observational mode is adopted during the performance of *tekna*’, whereas in the overall process of the interviews, a participatory mode is used as a method to access and gain information from the *tukang tekna*’. This an ongoing project will contribute to the documentation of *tekna*’ in the form of written publications and visuals, particularly to the field of oral tradition among the indigenous peoples of Sarawak.

Keywords: *Tekna*’, oral tradition, traditional cultural expression, the Kayans.

Introduction

The idea of studying *tekna*’ is derived from our keen interest in exploring the narrative authenticity among the indigenous peoples of Sarawak. With my advantage as a Kayan, at least to begin with, my fellow researchers and I travelled to Miri, the northern city of Sarawak to conduct our field study on *tekna*’, one of potentially extinct oral tradition